

## **Protect Your Energy From Energy Vampires** *An Interview with Judith Orloff, M.D. by Alissa M. Lukara*

ALISSA LUKARA: In your new book, *Positive Energy: 10 Extraordinary Prescriptions for Transforming Fatigue, Stress & Fear into Vibrance, Strength & Love*, you mention Energy Psychiatry and the importance of a positive energy program in one's life. Tell me about that.

JUDITH ORLOFF, M.D.: The reason I wrote *Positive Energy* is because there is an epidemic of exhaustion in America and probably the world. People are walking around tired and depressed and not questioning these states as anything but normal. I wrote the book to say you must question them, and here are some strategies to improve your energy. In the book, I talk about Energy psychiatry, which is the form I practice. It integrates traditional medicine with spirituality, awareness of subtle energy and intuition. I came from a traditional background. I trained at UCLA and did my residency there. It was all biologically oriented, meaning they believed that human behavior is a reflection of our biochemistry alone. I was taught to give out medications. I was never taught about subtle energy that's related to human behavior or intuition or spirituality. I think that psychiatry is in the dark ages, and we need a new kind of psychiatry that incorporates all the other aspects with it. That's what Energy Psychiatry is.

ALISSA: I agree. The psychological work I did with counselors only went so far. Adding work that incorporated energy and spirituality deepened the healing.

JUDITH: Exactly. I get so many calls. I have about 5000 people on a waiting list for my private practice. But I don't have an assistant, so I talk to people who say the same thing you just did. I've been in therapy and did good emotional and intellectual work. Now I want to go to another level. It's a mass experience. It's so common that people are looking for more.

ALISSA: In my own instance, the emotional work alone took me to a certain place, but I hadn't really "gotten it." The work felt incomplete. Adding energy work and spiritual work was so powerful.

### **Protecting Your Energy**

Let's talk for a moment about the concept you discuss at length in your book of "protecting your energy." I'm not sure how many people even know that this is something they can do.

JUDITH: One point I make in *Positive Energy* is what an intuitive empath is. It's someone who senses energy, but absorbs it into the body and becomes exhausted by it. I'm an empath, so I have quite a bit of interest in the subject. I've learned that to keep my sensitivities open and not get demolished by a world full of negative energy, I need to protect my energy. That's why I got interested—because I have no desire to shut myself off or to become numb or neutral. I want to stay open to the world, but I also had to learn to protect my energy.

So many of my patients are also intuitive empaths. It's a missing piece in understanding themselves. Intuitive empaths go around with diagnoses of Chronic Fatigue or Fibromyalgia or depression, and an energy history is never taken. For anyone who's ever thought about protecting his or her energy, it's important just to gauge your own sensitivities. I have a quiz in the book to ascertain if you're an intuitive empath. For instance, Have you been labeled as overly sensitive. When you're around a friend in pain, do you take it on? Do you avoid crowds and busy places because you get exhausted there? Do you run to the refrigerator to overeat when you're around negative energy. These are signs that you're an intuitive empath. Perhaps everyone can evaluate themselves. If you're not, perhaps knowing this can help you understand your friends and loved ones who are.

I wrote *Positive Energy* because we're living at a time in human history when we're living with so much negative energy that it's overwhelming, and people don't have skills to deal with it. Even people who

aren't intuitive empaths get overloaded by the media all the time. Just to see the tape of a beheading can throw an empath off and disturb a non-empath tremendously. Having a consciousness about how energy affects you is so important, as are building positive energy, protecting yourself and limiting the negative energy.

ALISSA: Personally, I stopped watching the news on television. I have to get news in a different way via print media where I have more control over what I take in. I'm definitely an intuitive empath, too. It's one of the reasons I moved to Oregon from Los Angeles. But empathy or not, we need to learn how to live positively in the world.

JUDITH: Which is why we need to learn to protect our energy. That's why I devoted a whole chapter in *Positive Energy* to "energy vampires" and what to do about them. What I find working with my patients is that a huge source of energy drain comes from relationships. So, it's important to take an inventory of who gives you energy and who saps you. Who are the "energy vampires" in your life?

ALISSA: Let's go through a few of the energy vampires and how we can protect ourselves.

### **The Sob Sister**

JUDITH: The first one is The Sob Sister. Whenever you talk to one of these individuals, they cast themselves as victims. The world's always against him or her. He or she is not interested in solutions, only in complaining. This person can keep you on the phone for two hours, and you, wanting to be a good friend, listen.

The Sob Sister feels better. You end up feeling exhausted. The key is to set clear boundaries with this type of vampire. Limit the time you spend discussing The Sob Sister's gripes. The way you approach him or her is important. You don't say, "You're so self-obsessed; I can't take this anymore. You say lovingly, "I really value our relationship, but when you keep rehashing the same points, it wears me out. So, I can only listen for 5 minutes."

It's the tone. Tone conveys an energy. Even if you feel the other way, it's not effective communication.

Then, keep repeating the limits you've set. Restructuring a relationship usually takes a little bit of time.

ALISSA: What about people who see themselves as compassionate, and they feel like a bad friend or loved one if they just listen for a short while?

JUDITH: I describe two types of compassion. One is when you give of your heart because it's something you want to do. It makes you feel good and increases your energy. The other is "idiot compassion." You give and give and give, when saying no and setting limits is called for. I invite people to re-evaluate their mode of giving. Otherwise, they won't survive in the world. They'll be exhausted all the time.

### **The Blamer**

Another type of vampire is The Blamer. These people have a way of making you feel guilty for not getting things right. They dole out endless servings of guilt, or sometimes, resort to verbal abuse. Some Blamers you can just eliminate from your life. Others you can't, such as family members. First, you always have to try to set limits and say, "We need to treat each other with respect. And your blaming me hurts my feelings." Start with that.

Then, there's a visualization technique I suggest for people to deflect The Blamer's vibes. Use your own energy as a shield. Imagine yourself enveloped by a cocoon of light. Picture it like a shield forming a barrier around every inch of you. It stops you from absorbing the energy of the person's words. The

blaming, the words, have energy and attack you like bullets. They go into your body. The shield will prevent that. I interviewed the musician, Kenny Loggins, and he calls this putting on his invisibility cloak.

ALISSA: Do you have a sense of how it works? I do this all the time, but what about people who don't understand this tool.

JUDITH: It's very much like the visualization techniques that doctors teach their cancer patients. They teach them to visualize the T-cells eating up the cancer cells. This has proven to increase the survival of cancer patients. There's a lot of research on that. In the same way, a visualization technique can be used to guard you from negative energy.

ALISSA: What's another "energy vampire?"

### **The Drama Queen**

JUDITH: The next one is The Drama Queen. He or she has a way of exaggerating small incidents into off the chart dramas. Life is always extreme—either unbearably good or bad. The Drama Queen goes from crisis to crisis. This person wears you out with the dramas. I have a quiz for how to spot one. For instance, Does he or she frequently start sentences with, "Oh my god, you'll never guessed what happened." Is the person always breaking up with a partner? If the boss isn't giving constant compliments, is he or she telling everyone in earshot, "I'm about to be fired."

The Drama Queen is the easiest vampire to deal with. The key is to not give this person any mileage. Sit there calmly and say, "I'm so sorry this happened to you, but we have to get back to work." Don't do anything to invite The Drama Queen to go on and on. That's what this person wants. That's where this vampire gets its energy. If you don't feed it, it will have to go onto another victim.

### **The Constant Talker**

Another vampire is The Constant Talker. This person has no interest in what you're feeling and demands center stage. It's all about him or her. The talker's opinions. Jokes. Stories. This vampire gets to me the most. It feels like a barrage of negative energy that just drains me. The way to deal with The Constant Talker is not through nonverbal communication. That doesn't work. If you step back, this person steps forward. Crossing your arms won't help either. You have to interrupt. This is hard for people, but you have to define your needs verbally. "I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I have to go talk to this or that other person."

ALISSA: What about when you have a Constant Talker in your family?

JUDITH: Limit the time you spend with them. A friend's sister was this way. But she'd pout and feel bad if my friend pointed out her excessive talking. The sisters also had elderly parents who would get very upset about these interchanges. Since the sister won't stop talking, my friend now focuses on her breath and stays centered when she's around her sister. She attempts to be neutral by viewing the blathering with more compassion. She also puts a shield up to tune out the negative energy and limits the time she spends with her sister.

ALISSA: What are other vampires?

### **The Fixer-Upper**

JUDITH: One is The Fixer-Upper. This type makes you into their therapist. They complain on and off that they want you to fix the problem. They differ from The Sob Sister, who doesn't want solutions. The way to protect yourself is to distance yourself—with compassion.

It takes two to play this “fixer-fixee” game. To disengage yourself, you need to realize a few things. One is that others must take responsibility for their own lives. And, it’s none of your business to try to fix anyone. As a fixer, you’ll always end up drained. A mutually loving relationship doesn’t grow unless both people are working on it. Re-define your relationship with people.

If you stop playing an active part in the “fixer-fixee” relationship, people won’t keep coming to you. Otherwise, it’s as if you’re wearing an invisible sign that says “I’ll fix you.” People who want fixing gravitate toward you.

I interviewed the actress Jamie Lee Curtis for this chapter, and she talked about distancing yourself with compassion. She tells people, “You know, I think it might be time that you find a good therapist.”

Again, it’s the tone with which you say it. “You know, I think it’s time for you to get some help. I’m not a therapist.” If you say it lovingly and neutrally without an angry edge, then people are more likely to be able to hear it.

ALISSA: What about vampires that aren’t as obvious as these, but are people who still drain you?

### **The Outwardly Nice Socializer**

JUDITH: There’s one called The Outwardly Nice Socializer. These individuals sound fine, but after just minutes of contact, your energy drains. Maybe you even feel a little seasick or like you’re coming down with the flu.

The Socializer’s impulses are instinctive and unconscious. Often, this person was an emotionally starved child who learned to grab subtle energy from any human being with whom his or her energy overlapped. You often meet these types at parties, where people are open and ready for fun.

You don’t have to “be nice.” For years, I didn’t want to appear rude, so I “endured” these individuals but no more.

Let’s say you’re chatting with a man you just met at a conference, and your energy bottoms out. Politely stop this conversation. One of my favorite foolproof lines is, “Excuse me, I really have to go to the bathroom.” In any case, move at least 20 feet away, beyond the person’s energy field. If you feel immediate relief, you’ll know you were with this type of vampire.

### **The Go-for-the-Jugular Fiend**

The last vampire is The Go-for-the-Jugular Fiend. Unlike the others, this one is purposely vicious. The others don’t know what they’re doing. But this one cuts you down with no consideration for your feelings and tries to hurt you. This one is driven by envy or competition or severe insecurity.

Fiends use anger to cut you down, and they know exactly the right insult to use. They say horrible things like, “Forget him. He’s out of your league. Or, “Don’t be absurd. You’re not material for this job.” Real negative zingers. With a vampire like that, eliminate them whenever possible, because most likely, they’re not going to change.

If you can’t, you always break eye contact. Don’t ever stare deeply into their eyes because energy can be transmitted that way. Then, use your breath to revive life force again. Taking a deep breath brings you back to yourself. Also, see yourself breathing out the negative energy and negative vibes.

Finally, after you eliminate vampires from your life, remember to focus on the victory you’ve achieved. Maybe you excised a mean-spirited person from your life, or set limits with a busy-body relative at a

family dinner. Celebrate holding your own and becoming a master of your energy. Part II of this interview will cover ways you can transform your own negative emotional energy.

Judith Orloff, M.D. is the author of *Positive Energy: 10 Extraordinary Prescriptions for Transforming Fatigue, Stress & Fear into Vibrance, Strength & Love*, *Dr. Judith Orloff's Guide to Intuitive Healing*, and *Second Sight*. She is a board certified psychiatrist, a practicing intuitive, and an assistant clinical professor of psychiatry at UCLA. She also has a private practice in Los Angeles, and is an international workshop leader on the interrelationship of medicine, intuition, and spirituality. Her work has been featured on CNN, PBS, A@E, Lifetime, and NPR and in many national magazines and newspapers.